

Ag Column
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Lawns Stressed This Year

Most our area has been dry during the summer and early fall this year. Your lawn likely would benefit from some extra attention due to this drought stress. Lawns are more susceptible to disease and insect pressures due to drought stress. Most lawns have likely lost stand density due to these factors.

If your lawn density has been adversely affected, the open areas in the lawn provide a great place for broadleaf and grassy weeds to establish. Stress lawns provide a great opportunity for bermudagrass, dallisgrass, and nimblewill to establish. These perennial grasses are difficult to remove once established.

A healthy and dense turf is the best defense against invading weeds. Over seeding the lawn now would improve lawn density and avoid the aggravation of weed control next year. When lawns are over seeded, the success of the new grass will be challenged from shading and competition for moisture from the surrounding turf. Given the uncertain germination rate and seedling success, a rate of 7 pounds per 1000 square feet would be recommended when over seeding this fall. The recommended period of time for would be August 20 through October 1. Success of seeding this fall, especially after the October 1 date, will depend on soil moisture and moderate temperatures supportive of grass establishment. Your goal after seeding is to mow it at least one time before winter. The new grass can be mowed when you would normally mow the rest of the lawn, usually around 4 inches or less. It is best to not remove more than 1/3 of the leaf area at each mowing.

Fertilization will be important for an over seeded lawn and for maintaining the fertility of existing lawn grasses. A soil analysis is the only way to measure the pH, phosphorus, and potassium level in your soil. You can get soil analysis boxes and information at your local Extension office if you are interested.

In addition to phosphorus and potassium indicated in the soil analysis, your cool season lawn does need about 2 pounds each year of **ACTUAL** nitrogen per 1000 square feet to remain healthy. You should apply 1 pound in the fall and 1 pound in the spring. For more intensely managed lawns, additional nitrogen should be applied in the fall. 100 pounds of 10-10-10 has 10 pounds of actual nitrogen.